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Summary record of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 26 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Asadi ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

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98-81883 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/53/25, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/96, A/53/156–S/1998/78, A/53/165–S/1998/601, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/416, A/53/425 and A/53/487)

(b) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/53/449)

(c) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/53/65 E/1998/5, A/53/358)

(d) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/53/451)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa *(continued)* (A53/516)

1. Mr. Eghlim (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. With reference to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, he said that the developed countries should fulfil their commitments in terms of technology transfer and the provision of new and additional resources, which were essential for the implementation of those conventions. In the case of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, less than one year after the Kyoto meeting, the annex I countries still had not met their commitments satisfactorily, a matter of particular concern inasmuch as the developing countries were being subjected to pressure to undertake new commitments. It must be reaffirmed that the implementation of the Convention was based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It was also essential to observe the principles of non-discrimination and the equality of all States parties to the Convention. In the case of the Convention on Biological Diversity, his delegation considered that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties had represented an important step towards the fulfilment of international commitments, which would facilitate action at the national level. Countries with low forest cover should be actively involved in the forest biological diversity work programme, and the Conference of the Parties should work closely with the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on that issue and should consider including the results of their efforts in the forest biological diversity work programme.

2. Lastly, he noted that the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was languishing for want of financial resources and technical assistance. Desertification, with its adverse effects on agriculture, had a particularly serious impact on the poorest segment of the rural community. His delegation regarded the Convention as the most important international mechanism for helping developing countries deal with the problem and noted with satisfaction the growing numbers of countries that had acceded to or ratified it. The conclusion of a headquarters agreement with Germany and the establishment of a facilitation committee to promote cooperation among the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank were also welcome developments. For want of resources, however, the global mechanism of the Convention had not begun to operation in January 1998 as originally scheduled. Contributions from the international community and all other sources were essential to making the global mechanism operational and implementing the Convention.

3. His delegation supported the inclusion of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies in the United Nations calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1998–1999, with the conference servicing costs arising from sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies to be funded from the regular budget for the duration of the institutional linkage between the secretariat of the Convention and the United Nations.

4. **Mr. Shukri** (Malaysia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Malaysia, like other countries of the Association of South-East Asian nations (ASEAN), had had to face serious environmental hazards arising from forest fires. The problem had been overcome through action at the national and regional levels, with the help of the international community. On 30 July 1998, the Ministers of the Environment of the ASEAN countries had held their fifth meeting in Kuala Lumpur. They had agreed to remain vigilant and had reviewed the fire-fighting action plan developed by ASEAN, which included the acquisition of a new satellite data reception and processing system, the establishment of a fire-fighting research centre in Indonesia

and joint fire-fighting exercises. On 16 October 1998, a memorandum of understanding had been signed between ASEAN and the Government of Australia for the implementation of a joint initiative aimed at strengthening the Association's capacity to prevent and mitigate transboundary atmospheric pollution.

5. Malaysia considered the Kyoto Protocol a historic step forward in combating climate change, although it would have liked to see more ambitious targets set. It hoped that the political will that had prevailed at the third session of the Conference of the Parties would continue to prevail at the fourth session. It was concerned that media campaigns were suggesting that the developing countries were not being asked to assume their environmental responsibilities. The developed countries should take the lead, since they were responsible for the bulk of past and present emissions. Malaysia reiterated its adherence to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

6. The programme of work of the two subsidiary bodies, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, should be considered. His delegation would also like to see an early agreement on the three mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol, namely, the emission trading mechanism, the joint implementation mechanism and the clean development mechanism. It hoped that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties would result in agreement on financial resources and practical steps on technology transfer. Malaysia intended to contribute actively to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. At the national level, it was continuing to encourage the rational use of energy, research on renewable energy sources and the enhancement of "sinks". It was particularly interested in the issue of forests and had participated in the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests in Geneva. It would continue to contribute to the attainment of the objectives set at the Forum, and looked forward to working with Canada and Costa Rica in their initiative to hold a series of intersessional meetings to facilitate discussion on a legally binding instrument, a convention on forests.

7. His delegation wished to emphasize that Malaysia had already implemented several of the action proposals of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. In 1994 it had established a National Committee on Sustainable Forest Management to apply the criteria and indicators of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). His delegation reiterated its conviction that an international forest convention would provide for an equitable and transparent mechanism for ensuring the sustainable management of all types of forests.

8. Malaysia noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had recommended, in his report, that future El Niño events should receive the highest priority in disaster management. It looked forward to the holding, in 1999, of a special session of the General Assembly to review and assess the Barbados Programme of Action.

9. **Mr. Mathu** (United Nations Development Programme) noted that UNDP was supporting the implementation of Agenda 21, including the work on desertification and drought, and was working to promote synergies between the various international programmes, especially through support for their implementation at country level, in the overall context of its sustainable human development mandate. Addressing climate change was an important issue for UNDP because it was the developing world that would probably be hardest hit by altered weather patterns, changes in food production and rising sea levels. Increasing end-use energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy sources and new technologies and supporting suitable land and forestry management practices were essential priorities in alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable economic growth. Desertification demonstrated the inextricable linkage between natural resource management and social, economic and political dimensions. An increasing number of UNDP programmes gave attention to dryland management and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. A recent study showed that some 23 per cent of 113 countries surveyed had included desertification-related components in their country cooperation frameworks. That figure rose to 39 per cent in the case of the African countries and 60 per cent in the case of the Arab States.

10. Since the adoption of the Convention, many countries had been committing UNDP core resources to their national action programmes. Non-core programmes within UNDP were also programming support for the implementation of the Convention. The Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO) was coordinating UNDP's efforts and had provided technical and financial support for the implementation of the Convention in 49 countries since 1995. The bulk of the support had gone to Africa, while support to Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Arab States had been intensified.

11. At the national level, 23 African countries had launched national action programmes with the support of UNDP. Many had defined priority programmes focusing on efforts to combat desertification and drought at national and local levels. Emphasis had been placed on capacity-building,

including training and strengthening stakeholder participation, and in 10 countries community-based pilot programmes had been launched. UNSO support had recently been extended to seven Arab countries and, in Latin America and the Caribbean, support had been extended to 10 countries, the goal being chiefly to forge partnerships between civil society and Governments. In Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, eight countries were being aided by UNSO. At the subregional level, action programmes had been launched in four subregions in Africa and two subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean. All those programmes were underpinned by thematic and intersectoral programmes and initiatives, integrated, as appropriate, into national and subregional action programmes.

12. At the global level, the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism had been designated by the Administrator in consultation with IFAD and had taken up his duties. The facilitation committee to support the work of the Global Mechanism, composed of IFAD, the World Bank and UNDP, had met twice. During its second meeting, held in July, it had been decided to expand the Committee to include four regional development banks, the GEF secretariat and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism.

13. The Trust Fund to Combat Desertification and Drought continued to support dryland management and drought mitigation. It had received some generous contributions, amounting to $14.5 million. Contributions had not, however, increased sufficiently, hindering UNDP's ability to support affected countries in the implementation of the Convention.

14. In order to fully implement the Convention there was a need to create synergies with other programmes such as the environmental action plans, the other conventions and the socio-economic strategies and programmes. Adequate priority must also be attributed to combating desertification and obtaining the necessary financial resources. It was important also to create reliable partnerships.

15. UNDP's efforts had focused on assisting countries to launch their action programmes and complementary pilot and thematic activities. Future efforts would need to focus on the integration of the issue into all relevant programmes and on building strategic partnerships at all levels. UNDP would seek to integrate anti-desertification into core programmes, strengthen collaboration and coordination between units and make greater use of GEF.

16. **Mr. Blankson** (Nigeria) endorsed the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He pointed out that the Earth Summit had made everyone more acutely aware that protection of the environment and sustainable development were inextricably linked to the protection of life in general and human life in particular, and that a protected global climate was essential to the survival of present and future generations. At Rio, Governments and organizations had made sincere and concerted efforts to identify the causes of climate change and to undertake equitable remedial action which took into account the varying capacities of countries and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It was disquieting to note that that community of views had been steadily undermined, from the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the third. But the objectives of Rio would never be achieved if people forgot that most of the emissions of greenhouse gases were directly traceable to the developed countries, which accordingly had pledged that they would assume their responsibilities and provide the developing countries with technical and financial assistance, in order to enable the latter to contribute to the attainment of those goals, and that all the parties had recognized that for the developing countries those goals were indissolubly linked to economic growth, eradication of poverty and the right to development. It was contrary to the goals of Rio and of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and thus to the collective obligations of all countries to present and future generations, to try, six years later, to assign equally the liabilities and obligations among parties whose resources were not equal. Nigeria hoped that the developed countries would soon find satisfactory solutions which would enable them by 2008 to reduce their overall emissions of greenhouse gases to at least 5 per cent below 1990 levels, as called for by the Kyoto Protocol.

17. Nigeria had ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and attached all the more importance to its implementation because it was itself affected by drought. It was gratifying to note the number of countries that had ratified the Convention and it welcomed the signing of the headquarters agreement with the Government of Germany. It hoped that at its second session, which would be held in Dakar in November and December 1998, the Conference of the Parties would enjoy the full support of all concerned in monitoring progress and promoting cooperation, scientific and technical research and the financial and technical support which were essential to the local communities in order to combat desertification. He hoped that the Convention would receive financial support for the duration of its institutional linkage with the United Nations, as the Conference of the Parties had requested at its first session.

18. **Mr. Don Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization) said that no negotiating process could succeed without the resolute will to translate words into actions. He recalled that the issues under discussion formed a major part of the mandate of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and that they were of crucial importance since human survival depended upon them. In fact, three quarters of natural disasters were related to climatic and meteorological conditions. Climate change, combined with global warming or other phenomena caused substantial deterioration in the natural environment and, as far as people were concerned, degradation of socio-economic conditions, material damage, health problems and losses of human lives. That was why so many conferences had been convened, producing so many international instruments, action programmes and strategies which were now being implemented, particularly the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. WMO was participating actively in their implementation, alongside other bodies both within and outside the United Nations system. WMO recognized the fact that the primary responsibility for development lay with the Member States and that measures taken by the international community should support and complement the efforts of the Member States so as to extend their scope and facilitate their ownership of all aspects of their development. All initiatives by members of the international community, irrespective of their capacities and mandates, should have as their lowest common denominator the sustainable development of the Member States, and in particular the developing countries; there was only one route to sustainable development, and that was through the economic and social development of Member States and protection of the environment and natural resources. It was high time to reassess the ways in which science and technology could contribute to sustainable development. In fact, its objectives would be attained more rapidly if the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development were translated into concrete and complete actions.

19. The Director of the Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction had raised many of the points which WMO would like to see incorporated in a resolution relating to implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/200. WMO assured the Secretariat of the Decade of its collaboration and support, and would be involved in the preparation of the events planned for July 1999 and beyond for the end of the Decade. WMO would continue to play an active role in the Inter-agency Task Force on El Niño and considered that it was imperative for the international community to prepare for the twenty-first century in terms of disaster prevention and mitigation. As for protection of the global climate and implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, WMO would continue to work with the relevant agencies of the United Nations system and other partners. It would pursue the improvement of the regional and global observation networks of the climate system, and the enhancement of national meteorological and hydrological systems. WMO hoped that at the fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Buenos Aires in November 1998, there would be a clear will to implement the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, and that special treatment would be given to the developing countries, given their vulnerability. The small island developing States should be protected against a number of risks: the disappearance of their tourist industries, natural disasters, especially the rising sea-level resulting from global warming, and other disasters, including those due to technology, which had serious consequences socio-economically and ecologically. WMO would work to facilitate their development and give them more resources with which to prevent disasters. WMO believed that it was important to prepare well for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the small island developing States, to be held in New York in September 1999. Under the Convention to Combat Desertification, WMO would continue to help the countries that were vulnerable to drought and desertification, in collaboration with the relevant international organizations and the countries concerned. It underscored on the need to provide special treatment for the regions severely affected by drought and desertification. WMO was continuing to cooperate closely with the Executive Secretary and Interim Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and hoped that the second Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in November and December 1998 in Dakar, would take concrete measures to further its implementation.

20. **Mr. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that his country which, like others in Africa, suffered from desertification, accorded great importance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and considered that attention should be given to the inadequacy of the resources allocated to its implementation and that the procedures for financing the Global Mechanism should be reconsidered with a view to providing it with the means to discharge its responsibilities

effectively. His delegation noted with concern that the Global Mechanism had not begun to carry out the tasks assigned to it although it was supposed to have begun by 1 January 1998, in accordance with the decision taken at the first session of the Conference of the Parties held in Rome. As the Ambassador of Benin had said, Africa had already assumed its responsibilities, and had started to combat desertification at national and regional levels, whereas the industrialized countries had not discharged their financial obligations in terms of financing the implementation of the Convention.

21. His delegation thanked Senegal for hosting the second session of the Conference of the Parties, and was awaiting with some impatience the discussions that would be held, especially regarding the procedures for participation in the Global Environment Fund for financing projects dealing with desertification which were related to the other environmental matters with which the Global Environment Fund was concerned.

22. His delegation recognized that the General Assembly had made specific and pertinent recommendations in its resolution S/19-2, and that it had *inter alia* recommended that the parties to the Conventions signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or as a result of it, as well as to other conventions related to sustainable development, should cooperate in exploring ways and means of collaborating in their work to advance the effective implementation of those Conventions. There should be a scientific assessment of the ecological linkages in cooperation with the Conferences of the Parties to the relevant conventions and their policy-making bodies; it was a role fulfilled by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with the comparative advantage it had both technically and scientifically. Firstly, the linkages should be defined and agreement reached on them at the level of the Conference of the Parties and of the General Assembly. Secondly, the linkages must contribute to enhancing operational coordination in cross-sectoral areas. The study should not end up merely assigning an order of priority to the Conventions, because that would not be productive. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change both fell within the mandate of the General Assembly, whereas the Convention on Biological Diversity fell within the mandate of UNEP. Drawing up budgets for the three Conventions differed from one to the other, especially with regard to the difficult financial situation which had given rise to the Convention to Combat Desertification. Thirdly, whatever the outcome of the discussions on ecological linkages, it must respect the terms of reference of UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development, as required by the Nairobi Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. Fourthly, it was necessary to take into account the Second Committee's consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements (A/53/463).

23. Finally, he expressed the hope that the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, which would be taking place in Senegal, would set up a committee to monitor implementation of the Convention, and endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation (A/53/516, paragraph 12) regarding inclusion of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies for 2000–2001 in the calendar of conferences and meetings for that biennium.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations A/C.2/53/SR.26

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Summary record of the 26th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 28 October 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Özügergin (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Turkey)

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98-81937 (E)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Özügergin (Turkey), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 93: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*)

(d) Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (*continued*)

Draft resolution on globalization and liberalization of the world economy – prevention of the marginalization of weak or vulnerable economies (A/C.2/53/L.14)

1. **Mr. Calovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), introducing the draft resolution, said that, in the view of the sponsors, prevention of marginalization would be the priority issue in the future. It had no financial implications and the sponsors hoped it could be adopted by consensus. The resolution did not seek to establish a new category of States, or to define the specific measures needed to prevent the negative effects of globalization and liberalization.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/C.2/53/L.15, L.16 and L.17)

Draft resolution on the review of progress made in implementing conventions related to environment and sustainable development (A/C.2/53/L.17)

2. **Mr. Maksimychev** (Russian Federation), introducing the draft resolution, said that the environmental conventions were growing in significance, and that the links between the conventions could have an impact in the area of policy recommendations. The General Assembly should consider the situation from a cross-sectoral and integral perspective, and the draft resolution presented one possible approach.

(c) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/C.2/53/L.15)

3. **Mr. Hapsoro** (Indonesia) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, adding that Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway had joined the sponsors.

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/C.2/53/L.16)

4. **Mr. Todjinou** (Benin), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, drew attention to paragraphs 5 and 12.

Agenda item 98: Implementation of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997–2006) (A/C.2/53/L.18)

Draft resolution on the International Year of Microcredit, 2005 (A/C.2/53/L.18)

5. **The Chairman** drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/53/L.18, which the Economic and Social Council had recommended to the General Assembly for adoption.

Agenda item 96: Training and research

(a) United Nations University (A/53/31, A/53/392 and Add.1, A/53/408)

6. **Mr. van Ginkel** (Rector, United Nations University (UNU)) introducing the report of the Council of the United Nations University (A/53/31), said that the past year had been primarily one of taking stock and of reorientation. The Council had decided to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the work of the University over the past 20 years and the Joint Inspection Unit had also undertaken an evaluation. Yet another impetus for self-evaluation were the proposals made the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 51/187, which were discussed in document A/53/408. Those evaluation processes were reaching an end, and the peer review group report would be submitted for consideration to the Council in December 1998.

7. In the meantime, measures had been taken to enhance the internal cohesion of the University and the synergy in its activities by strengthening the academic capabilities of the Tokyo centre and the links with other host countries. In addition, the structure of its programmes would be centred around two major priorities, peace and governance and the environment and sustainable development.

8. At its December meeting, the Council would adopt a strategic plan which would focus on the mission and guiding

principles of the University, its strategic directions, academic goals and objectives and means of implementation. Specifically, UNU should continue to serve as a catalyst for fundamental research and reflection on policy issues. It should act as a reservoir of ideas for the United Nations system and also strengthen its capacity-building activities in developing countries. The plan would pay specific attention to such crucial issues as strengthening the support base in host countries through activities targeted at youth, and developing new forms of cooperation with universities and researchers around the world and with other partners in the United Nations system.

9. To achieve that vision, the University must obtain the support of all Member States. He expressed appreciation to the major stakeholders, particularly the host countries, Japan, Finland, the Netherlands, China, Portugal, Macao, Venezuela, Jordan, Ghana, Zambia and Iceland. It must not only remain relevant to Member States and donor Governments, but must also retain its credibility in the academic world, and therefore, it must continue to operate with academic freedom and autonomy within the framework of its charter. The expertise, knowledge and wisdom of the members of its Council and advisory boards constituted a major resource to the University, and as such, those bodies should be seen not as a burden but as an asset.

10. He had been encouraged by the number of people who were aware of the work of UNU, the positive evaluation of many of its publications and the positive response to its new initiatives. The Secretary-General's reform proposals posed new challenges and opportunities, and he looked forward to the promising opportunities presented by cooperation with the Strategic Planning Unit.

11. Now, more than ever, there was need for integrative, multidisciplinary and multicultural long-term thinking. As an international community of scholars and a bridge between the world of learning and the trustees of the community of nations, the University had a privileged role to play in the process.

12. **Mr. Kuyama** (Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)), introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/53/392), said that the inspectors had focused mainly on issues of governance. Their recommendations were grouped into four clusters: university governance, institutional development, programme planning and implementation and financing and management.

13. With regard to university governance, the inspectors considered that the composition of the UNU Council should be reviewed with a view to reflecting more fully the diversity of its stakeholders and thus enhancing the practical relevance of its activities to problems of global concern. Its governing structures currently consisted of close to 100 members. To insure greater cost-effectiveness, those structures should be reviewed and streamlined.

14. In the area of institutional development, JIU had recommended that the role of the University Centre in Tokyo should be revitalized, both in its "think- tank" function and in management oversight of the UNU system as a whole. At the same time, it should develop innovative methods of capacity-building and strengthening of the research and training centres and programmes in developing countries. In that context, the possibility of linked funding could be explored with potential donors.

15. As the Secretary-General had rightly observed, the potential of the United Nations University remained largely underutilized by the United Nations community. Interaction and collaboration on programme matters between the University and the other organizations of the United Nations system should be systematized by, *inter alia*, utilizing the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in a more systematic manner and strengthening the University's dissemination activities within the United Nations system, particularly with regard to intergovernmental policy and normative processes.

16. The most important source of financing for the University was the Endowment Fund, whose original target had been US$ 500 million. In fact, contributions to the Endowment Fund thus far amounted to less than half that amount; furthermore, such contributions were generally earmarked by donors for particular Research and Training Centres and Programmes (RTC/Ps). With a view to enhancing the coherence of United Nations University operations, JIU recommended a review of the current situation at an appropriate time. In the meantime, potential donors to the University might consider the "linked" funding arrangement outlined in Recommendation 10 (b), whereby a percentage of contributions to a University entity in a developed country would be provided to another University entity in the developing countries (A/53/392, para. 89). In Recommendation 10 (c), JIU proposed that the University should be included in the list of organizations eligible for participation in the annual United Nations Pledging Conference.

17. Under Recommendation 11, JIU recommended that the Secretary-General should facilitate the implementation of common premises and services for the United Nations system in Tokyo.

18. He was pleased to note that the Secretary-General endorsed most of the JIU recommendations and did not

entirely reject those to which he did not give his full support but rather recommended approaching them "with some caution" (A/53/392/Add.1, para. 12). He expressed the hope that the General Assembly would adopt a resolution on the United Nations University containing most of the JIU recommendations or at least reflecting their thrust. In that context, he pointed out that Recommendations 1, 10 (c) and 7 (d) required direct action by the General Assembly.

19. **Mr. Perez-Segnini** (Venezuela) commended the United Nations University for its work and its contributions to the deliberations of the Second Committee on a number of items, including financing for development. Venezuela had been one of the main contributors to the University's Endowment Fund and Caracas was the headquarters for its Programme for Biotechnology in Latin America and the Caribbean (BIOLAC), which was having a growing impact in the region. The University could serve as a valuable tool and a bridge between the United Nations and the international university community in its four priority areas of work: the environment, science and technology, development and peace and governments. It could carry out its work most effectively if it remained an autonomous organ of the United Nations.

20. **Ms. Dong Guilan** (China), noting that her Government attached importance to the University's research and training programmes, said that, as a result of rapid advances in science and technology and increased global economic integration, it was imperative to have a new perspective and an innovative way of working to put plans into practice. Therefore, it was necessary for the University to readjust its focus and improve its method of work. Her delegation was pleased to see that the University had made great efforts recently to improve its management and efficiency. Since the University had limited financial and other resources, it must establish an order of priority. It should pay greater attention to needs in the area of environment and development, make its research and training programmes more problem oriented and practical, and allocate its resources in a more rational manner. Moreover, measures should be taken to ensure timely and extensive dissemination of research findings.

21. **Mr. Mahtab** (India) said that his Government attached importance to the research and capacity-building work of the United Nations University and had contributed generously to its Endowment Fund and to its World Institute for Development Economics Research in Helsinki, Finland. His delegation welcomed the Rector's observations on the Strategic Plan now being developed within the University and his intent to undertake research and capacity-building within two main programme areas: peace and governance, and environment and sustainable development. It also appreciated the need to carry out long-term fundamental research and reflection on pressing global problems of concern to the United Nations and its Member States. While the research conducted by the University should seek to achieve the highest standards of academic excellence, it should also be concrete, practical and policy-oriented and seek to cover major topics of relevance to Member States, such as the application of science to development.

22. His Government also attached great importance to strengthening capacity-building through training and it welcomed the University's intent to implement new and innovative approaches to capacity-building involving short-term courses, curriculum development, fellowships and faculty exchange. In that context, greater reliance should be placed on the utilization of national expertise and the focus of the programmes should be more demand driven in order to fully meet developing country needs and requirements.

23. **Mr. Ingolfsson** (Iceland) said that, for 20 years, the Icelandic National Energy Authority and the United Nations University had conducted a Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland, which had offered specialized courses and on-the-job training to more than 200 scientists and civil engineers from energy agencies and research organizations from 35 developing countries. The programme was aimed at capacity-building for national execution and building awareness of the importance of utilizing clean and renewable sources of energy.

24. Encouraged by the success of that programme, his Government had recently launched a Fisheries Training Programme in cooperation with the University. Thus far, participants from the Gambia, Mozambique and Uganda had received training in various aspects of the fishing industry, including policy and planning, marine and inland waters resource assessment and monitoring, company management, the processing of fish products and marketing. The inauguration of the programme had coincided with the International Year of the Ocean. He hoped that it would contribute to food security in the world.

25. **Mr. Rahmanov** (Turkmenistan) welcomed the report of JIU and the note of the Secretary-General. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's recommendation on the need to enhance the potential of the United Nations University, which was currently underutilized. It also supported his view that the University's mandate should extend beyond its role of a think-tank and also include promotion of the growth of academic and scientific communities everywhere, particularly in the developing countries. The scientific and academic institutions of

Member States should increase their participation in the work of the University with a view to organizing joint research projects, special panel discussions, round tables and various training programmes, including in the fields of solar energy and desertification control.

26. His delegation believed that the University should maintain its simple governance structure and its integrity and independence as an academic institution. He noted that the most recent instances of the University's cooperation with organizations of the United Nations system – the joint preparation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of the World Conference on Higher Education and of a series with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) on sustainable development in practice had been extremely useful to the delegations in attendance.

27. Turning to his own experience he said that earlier in the year, he had been awarded a full scholarship to participate in the University's Second Leadership Programme at its International Leadership Academy in Amman, Jordan. The programme had featured direct interaction between participants and world leaders, including such renowned politicians and academicians as Mr. Shimon Peres, former Prime Minister of Israel, and Mr. Oscar Arias, former President of Costa Rica, who had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It had also included a study tour to Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt and a dialogue with the Israeli Parliament, the Palestinian Authority, the Arab League and the Peres Peace Centre. At the dawn of the new millennium, the University's Leadership Programme had prepared its participants for a new culture of peace.

28. As a young diplomat from a newly independent nation, he had benefited tremendously from the experience and he wished to express his gratitude to the people and Government of Jordan and to thank all donor countries, particularly Japan, for their commitment to the University. He urged all Member States to provide all possible support to the University.

29. **Mr. Azaiez** (Tunisia) praised the University's successful balance of research and training activities in 1997 and its role in capacity-building. His delegation welcomed, in particular, the University's activities aimed at building the capacities of academic institutions in developing countries through, *inter alia*, a student training programme, seminars, scientific gatherings and specific projects. Nonetheless, the scope of those activities was not yet proportional to the tremendous needs of developing countries in that regard.

30. His country, which had an excellent education system, sought to develop cooperation with the major scientific and technical research centres in the world. It therefore hoped to see the strengthening of the post-graduate training capacities of the United Nations University, in order to enable it to respond to the growing demands of the developing countries in that regard. In that connection, the reports on the University should have provided specific information on the number and nationality of researchers who had received training.

31. The University's areas of focus, including the economic aspects of development, new technology, computer technology, advanced studies, natural resources in Africa, biotechnology and water, environment and sanitation, were of great interest, particularly to the developing countries. Its undertakings responded to the goals it had established in its medium-term perspective for the period 1996–2001. His delegation noted, however, that the University's activities continued to be located mainly in the industrialized countries, even those activities that were of greater interest to the developing countries. It hoped that the University's centres and programmes would be redistributed to include the countries of the South. In that connection, Tunisia, which had vast experience in desertification control and had established an Institute of Arid Lands, was prepared to host a new research unit on desertification and the cultivation of arid lands and the preservation of their ecosystems. The proposed centre would have a tremendous regional impact, since the African countries and the countries of the Middle East were severely threatened by desertification.

32. **Mr. Nishigahiro** (Japan), noting that the University had long been in need of thoroughgoing reform, welcomed the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/53/392). His delegation had these suggestions for revitalizing the work of the University. Firstly, the basic policies underpinning the organizational structure of the entire system should be more clearly defined. Secondly, much more should be done to increase the University's visibility in the world at large. He praised the efforts of its Council and its Rector to remedy the situation, adding that efforts to formulate a consistent and unified publications policy must be intensified. Thirdly, although the number of donors had nominally increased, the more recent contributions were earmarked for specific purposes. He therefore urged the University to streamline its administrative expenses and to step up its efforts to secure financing, particularly for its Endowment Fund.

33. Japan would continue to actively support the University. At the same time, it hoped that reforms in the University would be introduced on the basis of the

recommendations of the JIU report, the United Nations University third medium-term perspective and the University-wide strategic plan submitted by its Rector to the Council at its forty-fourth session. His delegation would submit a draft resolution on the United Nations University for consideration by the Second Committee, which it hoped would be adopted by consensus.

34. **Mr. Chouinard** (Canada) reaffirmed his Government's support for the activities of the United Nations University. The International Network on Water, Environment and Health (INWEH) had been established in Canada in 1996. Located at McMaster University in Ontario, INWEH offered capacity-building programmes tailored to the needs of developing countries. The Network was comprised of water pollution and management experts, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, representatives of the United Nations and other multilateral bodies and the private sector. It cooperated closely with the United Nations and the United Nations University systems and with various specialized agencies, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the World Bank. It specialized in identifying appropriate science and technology for meeting water needs and assisting environmental industries in developing countries with emphasis on capacity-building.

35. Initially, priority was being given to projects in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. Its first revenue-generating project had been launched in Mexico; in Central America and the Caribbean, it planned to carry out a project on coastal marine ecosystems and coastal development. It had begun collaborating with the Pan American Health Organization to deal with the environmental impacts of mining. It also planned to install a solar-powered groundwater pumping system in the Sahel region of West Africa, to provide assistance to the National Centre for Environmental Health Activities in Jordan and to assess the potential impact of water-borne contaminants on human consumption of fish and seafood in the Arabian Gulf/Abu Dhabi coastal zone.

36. **Mr. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that his country was proud that its capital, Amman, had been chosen as the location for the International Leadership Academy, pursuant to a resolution adopted in December 1994 by the Council of the United Nations University. The Academy had been established with a view to providing training for future leaders, and providing them with the knowledge, skills and strategies required to deal with the issues they would encounter. It was also intended to be a centre for the exchange of information and experience. In the few years it had been in operation, the Academy had arranged a variety of activities and had offered participants the opportunity to benefit from the experience of prominent world statesmen and exchange views on many current global issues. The Academy was the first institution of its type in the Middle East, and his delegation therefore urged the international community to provide it with every support.

37. **Mr. Murat** (Haiti) said that his delegation particularly welcomed the efforts of the University in exploring factors that might explain national and international problems, including the series of studies on the situation in Haiti from 1986 to 1996. The University still needed to work in order to enhance its prestige and diversify its capacities in order to address the concerns of people around the world on the eve of the third millennium. Its publication policy should also take more account of the other working languages of the United Nations so that the studies produced might reach larger audiences. Effective work by the University was not possible unless Governments and the bodies of the United Nations system concerned contributed to its budget. Member States should therefore honour their commitment to contribute to the University's Endowment Fund in order to finance the running of the units of the United Nations University rather than to create new centres that were merely linked to it. His delegation congratulated the University on its initiative to maintain cooperation with UNITAR. Such cooperation, in line with General Assembly resolution 52/206, was an important stage in the rational division of labour between the main training and research institutions of the United Nations system. His delegation encouraged the University to continue the process of reform already under way in order to streamline its management systems and mechanisms. That would facilitate the coordination of the University's operations and would lead to a better allocation of its financial resources.

38. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana) expressed support for the work done by the University. His delegation had taken note with appreciation of the efforts being made by the University to implement General Assembly resolution 51/187 and wished to encourage the University to continue its activities in the service of the United Nations.

39. **Mr. van Ginkel** (Rector of the United Nations University) said that many of the reforms were already being undertaken by the University, for it was really committed to improving its functioning and to being of greater service to developing countries and the United Nations system as a whole. The University's role was threefold: to act as a think tank focusing on fundamental and integrated research; as an organ that focused on capacity-building and; as an action-oriented organ, focusing essentially on field activities. In that connection, the University was currently working on

becoming more active in the field of combating desertification.

Agenda item 97: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/53/72–E/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/163–E/1998/79)

40. **Ms. Al-Bassam** (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office), introducing the report contained in document A/53/163–E/1998/79 said that during the period covered by the report, the stalled peace process, Israeli occupation policies and closure of the occupied territories had aggravated the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The second half of 1997 had witnessed an explosion in building construction throughout the occupied territories to the extreme detriment of the Palestinian people. Limited access to water, as a result of Israeli policies, remained the greatest obstacle to Palestinian agricultural development. Moreover, Israeli industrial concerns in the occupied West Bank had profited from the lack of enforcement by the Israeli authorities of environmental regulations on soil, air and water quality.

41. Palestinians had traditionally made up the bulk of the work force engaged in the construction and daily maintenance of settlements throughout the occupied territories. The unemployment situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remained critical, in particular owing to closures and increased reliance of Israel on expatriate workers from outside the region. Moreover, during the period under review, the prevailing economic environment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had inhibited investment and growth, owing to the continued ambiguity of the legal and political situation.

42. With respect to the Syrian Golan, the Arab population faced further deterioration in its living conditions owing to Israeli settlements, restrictions on employment opportunities and education, as well as to the Israeli taxation policy. Employment opportunities for the Syrian Arab population in the Golan Heights were extremely limited, since the movement of the Arab population between the Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic remained very restricted. Furthermore, those workers had no access to social benefits and health insurance. The Arab population living in the Golan were subjected to prohibitive levels of taxation. As with previous reports on the subject, the information contained in the current report was based on various sources, primarily from the Israeli and Palestinian press.

43. **Mr. A'ala** (Syrian Arab Republic), recalling that General Assembly resolution 52/207 had reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water, said that the report before the Committee detailed the difficulties facing the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan as a result of Israeli policies and practices since they had first occupied Arab territories in 1967. Those practices included the expansion of settlements, expropriation of land, water and other natural resources and the violation of rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over those resources. Such illegal Israeli practices had, over the long years of occupation, crippled the economic, social and ecological environment of the occupied territories. Israeli settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, reflected the strategic aims of that country, which were to expropriate land and water and to drive out the Arab inhabitants of that territory, using various spurious security and ideological pretexts.

44. Within days of the six-day war in 1967, the Israelis had begun work on the first settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan, in implementation of their policy to separate the Golan from its mother country, Syria, and the Knesset decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in that territory. Notwithstanding Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which stated that the Israeli decision was null and void and without international legal effect, the Israelis had continued to implement their policy and, on 23 July 1997, the Knesset had passed, in first reading, a proposal to complete the annexation of the Golan. The Israelis had not only taken possession of 96 per cent of the territory of the occupied Syrian Golan and destroyed 244 towns and villages, driving out their inhabitants to replace them with Israeli settlers, but were currently encircling the five remaining Syrian villages with a view to seizing the remainder of the land on pretexts which included the need for land on which to build military installations, settlements or roads. Side by side with that policy went the occupying power's water policy, which had the aim of preventing Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan from using their own water resources and striking a body blow at their economic activities, the foremost of which was agriculture. At the same time, Israel was using those water resources for its settlements.

45. The report also reflected the reality of Israeli occupation in Jerusalem and the other occupied Palestinian

territories. Israel was continuing its settlement drive, expropriating land and expanding existing settlements with a view to changing the legal and demographic nature of occupied Jerusalem. The report also painted a tragic picture of the conditions in which the Palestinian people were forced to live, being deprived of the use of their own water resources, of which 80 per cent had been requisitioned by Israel.

46. In his statement to the Committee under agenda item 94, the Israeli delegate had said that his country was extremely advanced in many fields of environmental development, and that it was making an effective contribution to regional and international endeavours to combat desertification. He had apparently omitted to make any reference to Israel's contribution to the desertification of the agricultural land owned by Arab citizens in occupied Arab territories by depriving those citizens of their water resources, to which the international community had stated they had an inalienable right.

47. **Mr. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that the report before the Committee provided detailed information reflecting the reality of the worsening living conditions of the peoples in the occupied territories. Those conditions were a result of tyrannical Israeli practices intended to gain control over the natural resources of the occupied territories and to deny the occupants of those territories their natural right to exercise sovereignty over those resources and realize their legitimate aspirations for development.

48. Israeli practices in the occupied territories did not merely reflect the fact of occupation, but represented a carefully planned strategy to expropriate those territories and their natural resources and to expel their owners in order to benefit an occupying minority. As noted in paragraph 4 of the report, by the end of 1998, more than 350,000 Israelis would be living in over 200 communities established since 1967 in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.

49. The report also made it clear that the Israeli occupation was using the Israeli settlements as a tool for what could be called environmental terrorism directed against the inhabitants of those territories. The Israeli Government had deliberately located highly polluting industrial facilities in the occupied territories, ignoring basic international environmental guidelines. According to paragraph 27, there were 45 enterprises operating in the industrial park of Burkan adjacent to the settlement of Ariel. The owners of those factories escaped the tighter rules on health and the environment inside Israel itself to work in the West Bank where they got tax breaks. In addition to Burkan, Palestinians had complained about the operation of industrial facilities at Ariel, Karne Shomron, Kiryat Arba and Adumim.

50. The restrictions placed by Israel on the right to education of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan amounted to the theft of the future of whole generations, and a violation of their natural right to improve living standards. According to paragraph 60 of the report, improvement of living conditions were further aggravated owing to restrictions on expanding educational facilities, facilitation of education in the Syrian Arab Republic and access to education in Israeli colleges.

51. The economic strangulation imposed by Israeli policies severely restricted the economic development choices of the peoples living under occupation. A racist policy differentiated between the rightful owners of the territories and the Israeli settlers and created situations which contravened all international laws and norms. As noted in paragraph 22 of the report, in 1987, when settlers were barely 10 per cent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, Palestinian consumption of water totalled 115 cubic centimetres while settler consumption equalled 97 cubic centimetres. A report by Peace Now noted that the Jewish settlers' per capita irrigated areas were 7 and 13 times larger than the areas accorded to the Palestinians for irrigation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, respectively.

52. Numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions had condemned categorically the measures taken by Israel with regard to settlements, and their negative social and economic impact since 1967 on the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. Those resolutions had also reaffirmed the applicability of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Security Council resolution 465 (1980), had mentioned the need to consider measures for the impartial protection of private and public land and property and water resources.

53. The Israeli practices created a climate that promoted confrontation between Palestinians and the settlers and complicated the security situation, demonstrating the inconsistency of Israeli Government policy of demanding that security should be one of the top priorities of the peace process, while at the same time putting in place practices productive of tension, confrontation and violence not only in the occupied territories but in the whole Middle East.

54. Egypt had followed with great interest the recent negotiations at Wye River which had led to the conclusion of an interim agreement on 23 October 1998, and hoped that implementation of that agreement would put the peace process back on track, in order to ensure a just and comprehensive peace in the region based on the principle of land for peace, the application of international legitimacy and respect for the sovereign rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

55. **Mr. Al-Bader** (Qatar) said that the information contained in document A/53/163–E/1998/79 made clear just how far Israeli policies in the occupied Arab territories contravened every international convention, including the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It was particularly regrettable that Israeli expropriation of Palestinian territory, destruction of homes and expulsion of defenceless Palestinian civilians continued despite the peace process that had begun with the Madrid Conference in 1991. Israel continued to build new settlements in order to impose the status quo, while calling on the other party to negotiate. It was racing against time to bring Jewish settlers from all over the world and place them in settlements on occupied Arab territory in an attempt to change the demographic composition of the towns in those territories and ensure that settlers outnumbered the Arab inhabitants.

56. Recalling that General Assembly resolution 52/207 had, *inter alia*, reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, to cause loss or depletion of or to endanger the natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, he said that his delegation had frequently condemned the tyrannical measures taken by Israel against the Palestinian and Syrian people in occupied Arab territories, considering such measures clear and blatant violations of international conventions and United Nations resolutions. His delegation urged the Israeli Government to halt its inhumane practices. The Palestinian people had a history deeply rooted in its land, and the United Nations must not rest until their rights had been restored.

57. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for Palestine) said that despite the close link between the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, and the permanent sovereignty of the same peoples over their natural resources, General Assembly resolution 52/207 had focused primarily on the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources and on the destructive policies of Israel, the occupying Power, with regard to those natural resources.

58. The report contained in document A/53/163–E/1998/79 set forth significant facts and figures clearly reflecting Israel's continued pursuit of its settlement policies and the destructive effects of those policies on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people in occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. The report was identical to the one which had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council. He hoped that two separate reports would be submitted in future.

59. The report referred to East Jerusalem as if it were separate from the remainder of occupied Palestinian territory, using "the West Bank" and "Gaza Strip" to denote such occupied territory. On occasion, it used the expression "territories". As had already been pointed out to the Economic and Social Council, that was not the language used in United Nations resolutions. The Committee was consistent in using the term "occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem", and all relevant United Nations resolutions affirmed the unity and territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory.

60. The report exposed the magnitude of successive Israeli Governments' settlement drive, regardless of the condemnation of the entire international community and numerous United Nations resolutions, and of the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. It stated that by the end of 1998, more than 350,000 Israelis would be living in over 200 communities established since 1967 in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. The number of Palestinian homes demolished by the Israel defence forces in area C, had been 233 in 1997 alone and 290 from January 1997 to March 1998. A report prepared by the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B'Tselem) had indicated that 322 orders for the demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem had been issued, and that more than 1,000 homes had been scheduled for demolition by the current Israeli Government. The Government continued to expropriate Palestinian land in order to build new and expand existing settlements and construct bypasses. It continued to commandeer and divert to Israel itself and the settlements water from the occupied

Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan: some 60 per cent of total Israeli consumption was fed from sources in those territories. There was a huge discrepancy between the amount of water used by Israelis and the amount used by Palestinians: Israel commandeered 80 per cent of the water resources of the West Bank.

61. A further serious development referred to in many reports over the decades of occupation and verified by the Palestinian Ministry of the Environment was that Israel was dumping toxic and other waste in Palestinian areas. Between 60 and 80 tons of such waste had been found in the Qalqilia region, near the area's sole water source. The disposal by Israel of such waste in Palestinian towns and villages was one of its most serious abuses of the natural resources of Palestine.

62. The continuation of the aforementioned Israeli policies and practices was a clear expression of the ideology that aimed to increase expansion in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The Israeli Government gave the illegal settlements every encouragement while destroying Palestinian homes, withdrawing the identity cards of the Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem, commandeering the natural resources of the occupied territory for the use of settlements and placing every possible obstacle in the path of Palestinian national economic development.

63. He hoped that the Wye River agreement would prove a turning point, and that all the steps agreed upon would be implemented at the proper time, in order to conclude the interim stage and begin final status negotiations, which would result in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

64. **Mr. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that his delegation wished to commend the endeavours that had produced the report contained in document A/53/163–E/1998/79. The current Israeli Government was continuing to implement the policies of all the Governments which had preceded it, building new settlements and expanding existing ones in order to impose the status quo and change the demographic composition of the occupied Arab territories in defiance of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the will of the international community. He cited Security Council resolution 446 (1979) which had determined that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements had no legal validity and constituted a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and Security Council resolution 465 (1980), which called upon Israel to halt its settlement activity and dismantle existing settlements.

65. Due to Israeli settlement policy, the amount of land available to the Palestinian people for agriculture on the West Bank and Gaza Strip had been severely restricted; as a result, the contribution to GDP of agriculture was currently less than 15 per cent, and there had been a concomitant reduction in the number of Palestinians working in the agricultural sector. Available water resources were largely allocated to Israeli settler communities: settler consumption was approximately 10 times greater than Palestinian consumption. Many studies had shown that increased Israeli water consumption since 1967 had largely been supplied by the water resources of the West Bank and upper Jordan River. Israel was using ground water resources at a rate whereby they could never be naturally replenished. In addition it was depriving the Palestinian community of water resources: the latter's use of water had increased by only 20 per cent since 1967. The peoples in the occupied territory could use water for personal purposes only, not for agriculture or economic development.

66. Israel applied a double standard with regard to the environment and the application of environmental and health measures, depending upon whether they were to be applied in Israel itself or in the occupied territory. Israeli factories in the occupied territory contravened health and environmental regulations, and increasing numbers of factories were being relocated to that territory in order to evade the restrictions imposed upon them in Israel itself. A number of studies had shown the deleterious effects that had on the health of the people and the environment of the occupied territory.

67. Economic statistics showed that the standard of living of the Palestinian community had fallen as a result of Israeli policies and the suppression of the Palestinian economy. The Israeli borders were frequently closed, entailing losses to the Palestinian economy of some $10 million daily. With a view to making the Palestinian economy dependent upon the Israeli economy, Israel also made it difficult for it to trade with the economies of neighbouring Arab countries.

68. Israel was continuing to increase the number of settlements and settlers in the occupied Syrian Golan, and to restrict the inhabitants' employment opportunities. Syrian workers had no access to social benefits or health insurance and were subjected to prohibitive levels of taxation, including tax on income, health services, local councils, land and housing ownership and use of water resources. Such measures had systematically deterred the Arab population from investing in agricultural or small-scale industrial development and had incited many of them to seek wage labour employment.

69. Over the years, his country had made every endeavour to achieve a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and ensure that the people of the region enjoyed development and stability in place of the violence and instability from which they had suffered for so long. Even after it had regained its territory and water resources pursuant to the agreement signed with Israel in 1994, Jordan had continued to work for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. His country considered development and peace to be inseparable, and the right to development to be a basic human right. Peace could not flourish in the shadow of oppression, poverty and suffering. Economic security was therefore the only effective guarantee of peace.

70. He urged the international community to increase its financial assistance to all sectors of the Palestinian economy and alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. His delegation renewed its appeal to the Government of Israel to halt expropriation of territory, the building or expansion of settlements and to honour the undertakings it had made in the framework of bilateral agreements, including the recent Wye River Memorandum, which King Hussein had played a part in concluding. The peace process must be put back on track, and Israeli practices reviewed in order to bring peace to the region as quickly as possible.

71. **Mr. Azaiez** (Tunisia) said that the item should remain on the agenda as long as Israel continued its occupation, and as long as peoples were denied their civil and political rights guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The expropriation of land, the demolition of buildings and the diversion of water resources by Israel was a denial of fundamental rights. The report noted, among other things, that almost the entire increase in Israeli water use since 1967 derived from the waters of the West Bank and the upper Jordan River. Meanwhile, the Palestinians were forced to leave what little land they had fallow because of a lack of water and the fact that they were banned from drilling wells.

72. The situation was hardly any better in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Arab population faced restrictions on employment opportunities and education and was heavily taxed by the occupying authorities. That combination of restrictive policies had discouraged the Arab population from investing in agriculture and small-scale industries and forced many of its members to give up agriculture altogether. Frequent Israeli closures had been a major factor behind the 18 per cent drop in gross national product (GNP) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the 35 per cent drop in per capita GNP between 1992 and 1996. In addition, the gross domestic product (GDP) had declined considerably from 5.5 per cent in 1996 to an estimated 1.2 per cent in 1997.

73. For all the foregoing reasons, his delegation requested the General Assembly to continue its consideration of that item at its next session. A report should be submitted to the Assembly thereon.

74. **Mr. Miller** (International Labour Organization) said that employment was central to sustainable development within the occupied territories. The continued high level of unemployment and the limited proportion of wage jobs that were stable or otherwise satisfying, raised the challenge of job creation. Planned multilateral investment programmes in infrastructure were expected to create some 15,000 jobs a year. However, those new jobs would not be sufficient to meet the needs of the unemployed as well as of new entrants to the labour market. Therefore, much of the job creation needed to meet the expectations of the populations in the Palestinian territory would have to come from higher levels of economic growth, particularly the private sector.

75. ILO was willing to assist the Palestinian authority in putting in place policies and institutions to reduce unemployment. ILO, in collaboration with international donors and with the Palestinian authorities, had developed a programme of technical assistance covering various areas ranging from employment policies and support to the private sector and small enterprise to the establishment of a sound statistical system, particularly in the areas of employment and labour. Within that framework, studies had evaluated the scope for generating more employment in areas such as agriculture, small industries and exports. On the basis of research in those fields, ILO had lent its support to an International Conference on Employment in Palestine, which had been held in Ramallah in May.

76. There could be no lasting improvement in the situation of workers of the Palestinian and other Arab occupied territories without economic development accompanied by employment, training for workers and managerial staff, strengthening of employers' and workers' organizations and more efficient social institutions.

77. **Mr. Elron** (Israel) said that, it was regrettable that the Committee should be discussing the current topic which was, at best, superfluous to the Committee's work. Moreover, it was already covered extensively by the Israel-Palestinian interim agreement signed on 28 September 1995. And it was again included in the Wye River Memorandum, which stipulated that both sides reaffirmed their commitment to actively promote economic development and cooperation. Those were the appropriate forums for such issues.

78. The peace process depended on the support of the international community which meant, first and foremost, upholding the principle of direct negotiations. It also meant

creating an atmosphere conducive to achieving progress in the negotiations, not a climate of political confrontation. In particular, it called for the adoption of resolutions that reflected the positive developments in the process and the hope for a better future in the Middle East.

79. Unfortunately, the current debate contributed nothing at all to the cooperative spirit of the peace process. On the contrary, by raising issues that sought to predetermine the outcome of permanent status negotiations, the report before the Committee ran counter to the driving principle of the whole process, namely, that Israel and the Palestinians must resolve those issues directly.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.